

Appl. No. : 10/742,156
Filed : December 19, 2003

AMENDMENTS TO THE CLAIMS

1. (Currently amended) A method of manipulating a bodily tissue, wherein the tissue is enclosed by a definable outer layer of the same or different bodily tissue, the method comprising:

locating an opening in the outer layer, wherein said outer layer comprises bony or spinal tissue;

inserting within said opening to a point past the outer layer a distal end of a hollow cannula,

said cannula having a proximal end and a distal end and having an elongated longitudinal axis,

said cannula slideably housing an advancer coupled to a probe member,

said probe member having a proximal end connected to the advancer and said distal end of said probe member connected to a tip,

said distal end of the probe member capable of being advanced and retracted through a curved slot at the distal end of the cannula via longitudinal movement of the advancer within said cannula; and

advancing the advancer within the cannula and causing the probe member to be advanced outward from the curved passage at an angle between 30 and 150 degrees relative to the long axis of the cannula such that the probe tip travels and manipulates tissue parallel to the intersection of the tissue with the definable outer layer of tissue.

2. (Original) The method of Claim 1, further comprising locating an opening in the outer layer of a tissue within an intervertebral disc.

3. (Original) The method of Claim 1, further comprising guiding said cannula.

4. (Original) The method of Claim 3, wherein said cannula is guided by tactile feedback.

5. (Original) The method of Claim 3, wherein said cannula is guided by auditory signals or visual images.

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6. (Original) The method of Claim 5, wherein said auditory signals are obtained by ultrasound.

7. (Original) The method of Claim 5, wherein said visual images are obtained by a method selected from the group consisting of: magnetic resonance imaging, ultrasound, and fluoroscopy.

8. (Original) The method of Claim 1, wherein said opening is naturally occurring or iatrogenic hole.

9. (Original) A method of manipulating tissue within an intervertebral disc comprising:

inserting an insertion device into the intervertebral disc along a first axis;

deploying a probe having a probe tip laterally from the insertion device within the intervertebral disc along a second axis which is substantially transverse to the first axis; and

manipulating tissue via extending the probe tip across or through said tissue.

10. (New) The method of Claim 1, further comprising inserting a prosthetic device beyond said opening in the outer layer.

11. (New) The method of Claim 1, further comprising ablating a target tissue.

12. (New) The method of Claim 1, wherein said bony or spinal tissue comprises intervertebral disc tissue.

13. (New) The method of Claim 1, wherein said bony or spinal tissue comprises anulus fibrosis.

14. (New) The method of Claim 1, further comprising forcibly parting at least a portion of the tissue without cutting it.

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15. (New) The method of Claim 1, further comprising forcibly cutting at least a portion of the tissue.

16. (New) The method of Claim 1, further comprising aspirating fluid using one or more lumens located within said cannula.

17. (New) The method of Claim 1, further comprising delivering material using one or more lumens located within said cannula.